ELT: A CONSIDERATION ON THE DIFFICULTIES FACING INDIAN ENGLISH LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the difficulties encountered by Indian English language learners. The discussion emphasizes several main points, including: a) the interference of the mother tongue; and b) the current instructional aims, which have removed creative comprehension and original communication from listening, reading, writing, and speaking. c) an unhealthy obsession with incorporating 'technology' into instruction on the part of English language teachers, which has reduced language acquisition to a mechanical routine. d) the curriculum content in the majority of institutions, which focuses on students' deficiencies rather than their efforts: as a result, the learner's acquisition of skills and information is left uncontextualized. e) tertiary students' incapacity to gain proficiency in the area of language acquisition as a result of their grammatical ineptitude. Additionally, this study analyzes how English is taught solely as a 'library language,' and how efforts to increase communicative ability have taken a back seat. f) heterogeneous learners or learners from multicultural communities who are exposed to a curriculum centered on the goal of 'one-size-fits-all' education, which is frequently unproductive. A few ideas are also made to assist English language teachers in assisting pupils in overcoming these barriers to language learning.

Keywords: English Language, Grammatical, Education, Language Acquisition, Language Learning

1. Introduction

While English is not a native language, its richness and vibrancy have aided in its enormous growth in a multilingual environment. Today, English has begun to establish a foothold in a variety of areas in India, to the point that we have a thriving tradition of creative writing in
Indian English. The expansion of literacy, urbanization, and technological innovation are transforming the scope and intensity of English communication (Mittal & Agrawal, 2021). Today's metropolitan environment provides Indians with more opportunity than ever before to interact with one another via a sprinkling of English or by switching from a regional tongue to English and vice versa. However, the difficulties faced by Indian learners are that their level of English competence remains rudimentary (Asthana & Saxena, 2018), and they perceive achieving proficiency in English as an overwhelming and formidable endeavor. As a result, I've explored the many difficulties that Indian learners have while obtaining proficiency in the English language, as well as some solutions for resolving these issues and thereby facilitating better learning, in the sections that follow.

2. Contents

a.) The most frequent difficulty encountered by language learners is interference from the regional or mother tongue (Asthana & Saxena, 2018). "When a person learns a foreign language, he already knows his mother tongue, which he strives to transfer, Wilkins remarks. The transfer may be justified if the structure of the two languages is similar - in which case it is referred to as 'positive transfer' or 'facilitation' - or it may be unjustified if the structure of the two languages is dissimilar - in which case it is referred to as 'negative transfer' or 'interference'" (Wilkins, 1977: 199)." In the case of Indian learners, mother tongue interference occurs in the domains of syntax, grammar, lexis, and pronunciation. One of the most significant causes of this 'interference' is insufficient exposure to the target language. There are few opportunities to practice English in both the productive and receptive aspects of the language. Additionally, the learner is unaware that the engrained habits of his mother tongue are impeding his language acquisition. Frequently, the inaccuracies are conveyed through the language teachers themselves, perpetuating the problem

1. Teachers must regularly remind students that when speaking or writing in English, they must think in the target language in order to avoid incorporating any features of their home tongue.

2. The teacher should explain why some grammatical constructs are incorrect. It would be great if the teacher possessed an excellent command of the target language as well as a working grasp of his or her pupils' regional language.
3. Almost all English language teachers in India are non-native speakers. Because English is not our native tongue, there is a possibility that we will make errors in certain areas of the language (particularly in terms of pronunciation).

To develop professionally as effective models of the language we teach, it is critical to instill the value of proper pronunciation. Students typically mimic how we speak and write English. Not only do kids require increased exposure to the language, but we teachers also require increased literacy and proficiency. We must keep abreast of current events and developments by reading books and magazines pertaining to our field. As language teachers, we must keep in mind that the English language evolves together with its speakers, and hence we should avoid using outmoded approaches. We need to be more adaptable and varied in our approach to language instruction. We should talk with our kids how to recognize their own blunders and possible causes. This would result in a better understanding of the educational and psychological aspects underlying linguistic blunders (Gupta & Chaturvedi, 2021).

b.) Another significant issue that Indian students confront is a lack of clarity regarding instructional objectives among English language professors. Different degrees of achievement are anticipated in each of the four English language skills: learning, reading, listening, and speaking. Quite sometimes, listening and reading abilities are conveniently overlooked. The most critical part of learning is understanding ability (Asthana & Saxena, 2018). Three distinct levels of understanding ability can be distinguished:

• acquiring merely factual knowledge;

• acquiring a critical grasp of the ideas encountered by the learner when listening or reading;

• developing a creative understanding of ideas and values and their creative interpretation (Kapoor 1992). Similarly, three levels of competence are recognized in linguistic expression:

1. Informing others through everyday discussion and correspondence

2. Exchanging ideas

3. Communicating abstract concepts, ideas, and ideals in an innovative manner” (ibid, 79). As one can see, both circumstances limit language instruction objectives to merely (a) and (b) (b).
Thus, creative comprehension is eliminated from hearing and reading, while the ability to talk and write authentically is excluded. The majority of English language curriculum designers promote derivative thinking, which does not nurture creativity and creative expression. It is an unfortunate scenario when English is utilized solely for the purpose of being echoed and repeated and when students are drilled or educated to speak like parrots or robots rather than intelligent human beings. We, as English language teachers, appear to believe that native English speakers require perfect and linguistically sound command of the language, whereas Indian English learners require only a limited language that does not engage their creative or cognitive capacities. Therefore, rather than always attributing 'falling English standards' to low-competence learners who lack intrinsic motivation or to ineffective teaching practices/situations, it is best to recognize that there are conceptual issues with our English language teaching objectives that require serious reconsideration (Pathak & Saxena, 2021).

c.) The third point of contention is language teaching's disproportionate emphasis on and reliance on technology. The region of technology–enhanced instruction is akin to the immense unknown. It is obvious that rapid technical advancement, particularly in the sphere of information technology, provides tremendous opportunity for language acquisition. However, technology application is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, those who are computer competent and passionate about IT in ELT are more interested in the technology itself than in finding appropriate applications; on the other hand, the vast majority of ELT teachers are unenthusiastic or hesitant about using it. Elite minorities with the resources to acquire and deploy technology are compelled to include technology into their 'teaching techniques,' as evidenced by the widespread use of teaching aids. Each new gadget or instrument for language instruction is adopted - cassette players, language laboratories, television, the internet, and laptop computers. This has resulted in the commercialization of language teaching, which has made it a lucrative business. This is seen by the proliferation of Spoken English classes and crash courses on English language learning throughout the country. Regrettably, technology has also widened the divide between the haves and have-nots. As a result, students from remote areas who lack access to well-funded colleges are left far behind (Shukla & Kumar, 2021). “The traditional simplicity and democratization of learning/teaching, in which all that was required was a black board, a wooden slate, an ink pen, an ink pot, and a primer or book, is now likely irretrievably lost” (K.Kapoor 1992). It is self-evident that technology should not be abandoned totally. And no one
can deny that technical tools have a purpose. However, the fact that India is home to a sizable population of learners from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and with limited or no access to technology should always be considered while developing curricula. Additionally, this overwhelming reliance on technology renders language learning a mechanical process. Language instruction becomes a ritual, requiring the learner to participate in meaningless repetitions. This eliminates the intellectual difficulty associated with language learning and teaching, reducing both to a mechanical routine and a process in which HOW takes precedence over WHAT and WHY. It is critical, therefore, that all levels of education assist learners in eliciting their latent creativity (Gupta & Chaturvedi, 2021).

d) When it comes to teaching English at the postsecondary level (Kumar & Dutta, 2019), the syllabus is largely content-based and incorporates a literary and humanistic approach. Our universities' textbooks implicitly promote 'literary sensitivity,' with the premise that teaching literature will naturally aid in the acquisition of language abilities (Pathak & Saxena, 2021). This is a contradictory scenario since, despite our lofty and admirable goals of teaching the greatest of literary thought and theory in English, our students' performances are pitiful. What good is it to teach Shakespeare's great works or Coleridge's visionary works if our students are unable to speak or even write ordinary English without making grammatical errors? This heinous situation exists as a result of a lack of clear objectives in elementary English language instruction, of which the learner is the victim. This has resulted in a precipitous decline in standards. We must recognize that grammar is a cognitive and conceptual system that serves as the primary modeling instrument for all knowledge, and that failing to teach grammar equates to failing to train the mind in the formation and processing of cognitive and conceptual categories (Kapoor, 1992). As a result, it is critical to integrate grammar-centered learning into English language instruction at the primary and secondary levels (Kumar & Dutta, 2019; Pandey & Kulshestra, 2020). While teaching grammar, the teacher should keep in mind the need of instilling in students an understanding of the relationship between grammar and meaning. It focuses attention on the sentence's overall meaning (D. Gnansambandan, 2002). Thus, it is clear that emphasizing meaning comprehension through proper grammar competency will undoubtedly result in effective expression in the target language.
Additionally, English is frequently referred to as 'the other tongue' and is thus taught only as a 'library language.' With a critical eye, one can see that the 'other tongue' teacher initially teaches only the mechanics of the English language, whereas the mother tongue teacher introduces the learner to I visual representation of a previously mastered language system, which entails recognition, discrimination, reading, and reproducing the symbols both alone and in combination." (1992, Narang) While such a method of intensive language instruction at the primary level (Pandey & Kulshestra, 2020) cannot be achieved overnight, it can be applied meticulously over the course of several years of language education up to the tertiary level in order to facilitate the learner's near mother tongue competency in the English language. Thus, the current state of English as a ‘library language’ can be converted into one in which learners demonstrates commendable communicative competence and mastery (Mittal & Agrawal, 2021).

Individual and multilingual needs for English must be considered when defining language education objectives. Individually, English remains the "language of opportunity" and "language of empowerment." Thus, the target level of active command should be suitable for both those wishing to further their education in English (Gupta & Chaturvedi, 2021) and those wishing to end their secondary careers (Kumar & Dutta, 2019).

3. Major Threats In Second Language Learning

Apart from above discussed problem there are other threats faced by the students to learn second language properly in their classroom:

1. a) Constrained educational environment

The term "learning materials" refers to products that aid in the process of learning. While books are a crucial component of education, they are insufficient on their own. Additionally, audio tools are required. The majority of language learning is imprecise. Students have books to read but are unaware of the proper pronunciation of certain words. How does a pupil acquire knowledge of how to pronounce a word? He/she must have the opportunity to hear his/her teacher pronounce correctly.
The majority of language schools rely entirely on a single dependable resource: the teacher. Occasionally, they watch or listen via unauthentic sources, which results in incorrect syntax (sentence structure) and word pronunciation (Yadav & Saxena, 2021).

b) The Mother Tongue's Influence

Students frequently acquire pronunciation by comparing it to their own language. Language transfer is a term that refers to the mother tongue interfering with the acquisition of a second language. This can aid in comprehension and use of the target language to some extent, but it can also obstruct the appropriate acquisition of the L2 (second language) rules, syntax (structure), vocabulary, and pronunciation. “Syntactic errors in adult performance” occur as a result of a learner's usage of their mother language, and this impact lasts a long time in the learner's mind. Learners are influenced in the following ways by their L1 (mother tongue):

• They transfer their first language's grammatical knowledge to the second, resulting in errors due to structural differences between L1 and L2.

• They mispronounce or have trouble pronouncing particular sounds as a result of the variation in phonological systems. “For instance, the correct pronunciation of the word 'forget' is /fget/, however students from Malayalam language backgrounds used to pronounce it as /frget/, as Malayalam has no idea of a silent sound.”

c) Cultural plurality

Human culture is similar to water in that it envelops us and is only noticed when it is gone. Culture as a process casts doubt on the notion that external factors such as food and costume holidays can impart culture. Due to the inextricable link between language and culture, it is felt through language. Adapting to a new environment is a necessary part of learning a new language and assimilating into a culture. This process is referred to as acculturation, which has two definitions. The broad definition is simply the process or act of cultural adjustment. Due to cultural differences, learners may have difficulty communicating with target native speakers. The difficulties develop when there is a mismatch between the context in which a student lives and the difficulty of a language activity assigned to the students.
d) Inexperienced educators

The majority of teachers are unaware of how to introduce a new language to a pupil based on their interests. Teachers are perplexed while attempting to educate students about the characteristics of a second language, particularly when teachers from diverse subject backgrounds are teaching English in the classroom. In our secondary classrooms (Kumar & Dutta, 2019), the professors who teach English do not have a background in the subject.

This is always a source of contention among students. Kids from rural areas perceived “Attitude and Teacher Competence” as the primary causes of difficulties in learning ESL more than urban pupils.

4. English Language Learning Difficulties Faced by Hindi-Speaking Students in India

The examination's primary objective was to investigate and assess the educational problems encountered by Hindi-speaking students in India and Indian expats in India, namely in Uttar Pradesh. It is widely believed that the process of learning English differs according on context. Learners with an Urdu or Hindi background differ in terms of their educational achievements. Similarly, those who thrive in an English-language learning environment may outperform their peers. Three different sorts of subjects were used to conduct the study. Although the study was descriptive-qualitative in nature, statistical inferences were drawn using quantification. The findings suggested that the majority of the learner's difficulties originated as a result of L1 interference with the second language acquisition process.

India has authoritatively recognized the importance of English by bestowing upon it the hallowed designation of 'Associate Official Language.' This status has evolved and changed over time as a result of political and social forces in a vibrant society with a democratic system and the presence of diverse cultures, languages, and religions (Upadhyay, 2016). English, which enjoyed a 'world class' and somewhat peripheral status in India during the Raj, has developed and is anticipated to achieve the status of a mandatory connecting language, the most extensively used language. English, which had a 'elite' and rather alien standing in India during the Raj, has now developed into a mandatory connecting language, the lingua franca. It has steadily been adopted as a subject, field of study, and, most crucially, the medium of instruction and testing in
the most critical sector of language acquisition: education in general and school education in particular. It is the modality of instruction in a large number of schools and serves as the primary, second, and auxiliary languages (Pandey & Kulshestra, 2020) at the auxiliary and senior optional levels. Advanced education in metropolises and larger and smaller towns is always conducted in English. Concentrations on students' language programs are critical because they are contingent upon specific study hall experience. As a result, they provide authentic feedback to instructors and instructional designers in order to develop need-based programs that assist various learner types and increase their efficacy and competence. Social disparities amplify these differences, as differences in learners' exposure to the English language and their socioeconomic circumstances result in differences in their learning (Upadhyay, 2016). Years of exposure to English language teaching/learning in school are insufficient to bring students up to the language's acceptable levels in many schools. In this context, the case of Urdu/Hindi speakers enrolled in separate schools is more significant (Pathak & Saxena, 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

There are ways to teach English as a second language. English's place in the world is characterized as follows: - English provides enormous opportunity for everyone. English's role in our educational system should be clearly defined. This should be determined in light of its widespread use and potential in science, technology, social sciences, philosophy, geography, journalism, international trade, and diplomacy.

Using Diverse Teaching Methods: - While teaching English, the teacher should employ a variety of strategies. Additionally, the teacher may utilize the language lab. Several approaches for teaching English include the following:

• The Grammar-Translation Method

• The Direct Method

• The Bilingual Method

• The Structural Method

• The Communicative Method

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The use of proper methods for teaching various topics appropriately contributes to the effectiveness of language instruction.

Keeping the Aims of English Teaching in Mind: The instructor should always stress the aims of English teaching, as this will aid in teaching efficiently (Shukla & Kumar, 2021). These aims are as follows:

1. To help pupils to comprehend spoken English.
2. To enable students to communicate in English.
3. To provide students with the ability to read English.
4. To provide students with the ability to write in English.

These are the basic objectives of English instruction, rather than enabling the student to pass the higher class (Pandey & Kulshestra, 2021).

Enhancement of Teaching Facilities: Special consideration should be given to ensuring that teachers have adequate teaching resources, such as space, books, and instructional aids. School and college libraries should subscribe to high-quality periodicals that keep them up to date on the latest advances in linguistics and English language education (Yadav & Saxena, 2021).

Make Students Think in English: “Make it a very clear rule, but one that is discreetly suggested, that no other language will be spoken in your class except English. Insist on their thinking being in English. This is a monumental task that can be accomplished only after several weeks, if not months, of education.”

Eliminate Socio-Psychological Issues: Many consider English to be the most difficult language to learn, while others believe it is useless. The teacher's efforts should be directed on resolving the pupils' socio-psychological difficulties through motivation and delegation of responsibility.

Communication Skills: “Never teach your students to speak in front of them; always speak to them. Continue conversing with them in simple English. They will converse once the initial icebreakers are completed. And they will learn when they speak. Encourage your students to
communicate with one another.” As long as pupils make an attempt to communicate in English, make a point of listening (Mittal & Agrawal, 2021).

This population continues to grow at a faster rate than that of native English speakers, emphasizing the importance of English instruction. Every teacher who teaches any subject in English to ESL students is not only a subject matter teacher, but also an English teacher, and as such, he or she should be required to constantly reflect on teaching and update practice to meet the needs of the learners.

It is critical that we accurately assess the English requirements of distinct groups of students and strive to provide each homogeneous group with a course that is appropriate and relevant to their needs. “We must ensure that English I serves as a service language for all learners and ii) fosters intellectual and cultural awareness of the present environment in which we live” (Verma K, Shivendra 1992). To address the aforementioned hurdles, we must establish clear objectives and make modifications to our syllabus, language teaching approach, materials, as well as our attitudes toward learners and their linguistic difficulties, and evaluation system. Teachers and students are a society's greatest assets. As a result, their requirements must be carefully considered in order for all individuals (teachers and learners) to reach their maximum potential in any way that is beneficial to their own life, society, and also to the growth and vitality of the language they use.

REFERENCES


